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A LETTER

FROM

JOHN BRADSHAW

OF GRAY'S INN

TO

SIR PETER LEGH

OF LYME.

PRINTED FOR THE CHETHAM SOCIETY.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following Letter was found among the muniments at Lyme. It is written on one page of a sheet of foolscap paper in a small neat hand, of which the signature is a fair example. The letter, interesting in itself as an illustration of the times, becomes the more so when we consider the great probability of its being the youthful production of a man, whose character and career were alike remarkable.

If it be objected that the subscription of the letter, given here in facsimile, bears no close resemblance to the firm and free writing of the same name affixed to the death warrant of King Charles, it may fairly on the other hand be urged, that the signature acquired by most men in official routine differs materially from the familiar writing of their youth, and possesses a character and boldness beyond that of their ordinary text. Another element of doubt must also be mentioned. There were two John Bradshawes contemporaries at Gray's Inn, the one admitted a student in 1620, the other in 1622; and, the original archives of that house having perished, it is not possible to determine with absolute certainty which of these was the future President of the High Court of Justice, or which was the writer of this letter.

Though it does not bear a complete date, the letter contains internal evidence of having been penned on the 13th of June, 1623. The style is not unlike that of the President, while the orthography is also similar in character to his; but the circumstance, which yields the strongest presumption of its having been an early production of the stern old republican, lies in the appeal made to Sir Peter Legh, as the influential neighbour of the writer's father.

John Bradshawe “the Regicide” was the third son of Henry Bradshawe of Marple Hall, an estate lying in close proximity to that of the great family of Legh at Lyme. Born in 1602, and baptised at Stockport on the 18th December of the same year, he must have been nearly twenty-one years of age when this letter was written. It is stated by his biographers that he had served a clerkship in the office of an attorney at Congleton, before he entered himself as a student for the bar at Gray’s Inn.

Milton, his friend, says of him: *Est Joannes Bradscianus nobili familia, ut satis notum est, ortus; unde patriis legibus addiscendis, primam omnem ætatem sedulò impendit; dein consultissimus causarum ac desertissimus patronus, libertatis et populi vindex acerrimus, et magnis reipublicæ negotiis est adhibitus, et incorrupti judicis munere aliquoties perfunctus; tandem uti regis judicio præsidere vellet, à senatu rogatus, provinciam sane periculosissimam non recusavit. Attulerat enim ad legum scientiam ingenium liberale, animum excelsum, mores integros ac nemini obnoxios;*

He appears to have been first employed by the Government in 1644; and, once embarked in public life, the history of his career continues interwoven with the annals of his country. After his decease in 1659, his remains were deposited in Westminster Abbey; and at the restoration of King Charles the Second they were removed to Tyburn and gibbeted.

Viewed through the disturbing medium of political strife, no one has been characterized by more widely contrasting epithets than John Bradshawe; but men of all parties must be struck with his extraordinary firmness, his singleness of purpose, and his courage. He never faltered while sitting in judgment on the King, nor ever repented of that deed: and, when in the arbitrary exercise of power Cromwell had dissolved the Parliament and dismissed the Council of State, he met the Usurper with stern rebuke and defiance.

W. L.

LETTER FROM JOHN BRADSHAWE.

Worthy S^{ur}

I receyved yo^r Answer to my last l^re by yo^r servant Birchenhalgh, ffor which I humblie thanke you, assuring my self thereby of yo^r continued ffavor in theise my troublesome stormes, towards me so meane & unworthy of the least exp^ression of yo^r Love. But for all this yo^r goodnes, I shall pmyse you this payment, to wryte it wth a pen of brasse in the tables of my heart, w^{ch} can as yet resound onelie prayse and thanksgyving. Concerning my l^re to my ffather I will onelie say thus much, It had too much Reason on my syde, for so impartiall a Justice as he knew yo^r self was to see & arbitrate my cause, ffor the ballance of neutralitie wherein he supposed he held you, would questionles on his part be yrby ovr^rturned. But let him do what he please, he shall soon^r be wearie of afflicting, then I will be of suffering, & by the grace of God I will shew my self a Sonne, though he cease to be my ffather. But to end this unpleasing argum^t, I will onelie in conclusion ppound this one Dilemma unto yo^r noble Construction — What ffruit that ffath^r may expect to come of his sonnes studyes, that wittinglie doth suppresse the instrument of his labors, & willinglie keepe in ffleters the freedome of his mynd, w^{ch} is that chosen toole appoynted for the fynishing of all such high attemptes, & whether the worke, imperfect by reason of such Restraynt, be layd to his charge that assumed it, or to him that was the Impediment, and yet was bound to have

helped the Accomplishing of the Enterpryse. I know Sr you understand & by this short question, you may gesse what may furth^r be urged, but I leave all to yo^r judgm^t and reposing my self on yo^r worth, I feare no disastrous censure.

ffor neglecting the Exercyses of the howse, it is a fryvolous objection, Himself hath been satysfyed in it and Mr. Damport will justify me, knowing I never neglected but one Exercyse of myne owne, w^{ch} was to argue a case, w^{ch} according unto course another should have done for me at my first coming to the howse, & I by ffeeing the Butler did of purpose neglect it, onelie deferring the tyme, that after I had been heere a whyle, I might pleade the case for myself; w^{ch} is so far from a fault, that contrarywyse the best students have ever taken this course, & is & hath been comended of those that understand it, & hereof I very well know my ffath^r can not be ignorant, having been acquaynted therewth. But it seemeth, how prone he is, to take exceptions agaynst me, when fynding nothing blameworthy, he returnes that for a fault, w^{ch} deserveth allowance and prayse. Concerning Mr. Damport, he is a worthy Gentleman, his Love to me doth cause me to respect him & his worth, in honestie to regard him. But I thanke you for yo^r noble advyse, & should esteeme my self base not to pursue and follow it, still wayting a good howre, when God shall be pleased to enable me to gyve lyfe unto my words by deeds equyvalent thereto. In the meane tyme, the trybute of a thankfull heart I pay you.

Ffor or domestique newes, I have sent you the Cause of my Lo: of Oxford w^{ch} is to be heard this Terme. The plot it is thought hath been to terryfie him so from his Offyee, as to yeld his place of High Chamberleyn of England to the high swolne ffavoryte and his famylie, w^{ch} his great heart will never yeld to; & therefore to make him, if not depending, beholding to his greatest Enemie, it is lykelie, for his words he shall be shrewdlie censured, & so remayne in Durance, till Buckingham returne from Spayne and gratify him wth his libertie & a release of his ffyne & so asswage his stomacke by this his plotted good turne. As it succeeds, I will certfyie you. The Ships are yet on the Downes, having been crossed & kept

backt by contrary wynds from their voyage. We heare no newes from Spayne, nor have not heard, this month, onlie as it is suspected, the Princes Entertaynm^t continues not so gloryous as it hath been. It is hitherto a true observation, that England hath been ffatall to Dukes, but above all most omynous unto the Dukes of Buckingham, of w^{ch} the Marquesse hath the tytle, & lykewyse Earle of Coventrie, & the Duke of Lenox is created Duke of Richmonde & Earle of Newcastle upon Tyne, & more Dukes & Earles are expected to hono^r this liberall Age. Kit Villers is made Earle of Anglesey in recompense of Barkshyres escape, & to increase the kindred, hath marryed wth Shelton, his moth^{rs} sisters daughter; but we are so used to wonders, that this is none at all. Lenox Arundell Pembroake & some other Nobles, who are styled the Lords of the Receptions, have been at Southampton & Ports-mouth to prpare royall lodgings & entertaynm^t, for the Prince & his Bryde of Spayne, whensoever they arryve.

Ffor or forreyn newes I have sent you all we have had any tyme this month, amongst w^{ch} I have sent you the parliamt of Regensburgh, holden by the Emperor and his Princes, wherein you may see what is done for the disposing of the Electorship of the forlorne Palatyne, a discourse not unworthy yo^r knowledge, who I am sure are as zealous for the good of the countrey & ffriends as those that beare greater sway & have better power of performance, be they but subjects of England. To conclude all my relatyon I will tell you of one mad prancke that happened wthin theise two nights. Sr Thomas Bartley was arrested hard by Grayes Inne for 4000^{ls} debt, & was carryed to the higher end of Holborne, and comitted under custody: About 12 of the clocke at night some Gentlemen of or howse and of Lincolnes Inne, met togeth^r for his Rescue, broke downe the howse, tooke him away wth them, beat the Constables Serjeants & Watchmen, & though St Gyles was raysed & almost all Holborne, yet they with their swords & pistolls kept them of, & brought him along to Grayes Inne: there were dyvers hurt wth Halberds, & about 200 swords drawne, & at least 2000 people. There are 5 or 6 Gent. taken & sent to Newgate, & wee heare

24/5/20

Mar 10

that the Names of above 60 Gent: are gyven up to the King; what will be done about it, we shall know in tyme. There are more murthers drownings deaths & villaynies, then hath been knowne in London of long tyme before. I had almost forgot the Moderator a booke uncerteyn wheth^r wrytten by a papist or a statesman (for indeed they are now so linked, as scarce can admit disting^{shmt}) for pr^rparing a way to reconciliation, between the Papists and us; howsoev^r by whomsoev^r, or to what end soev^r it is penned, it is a treatise I am sure, excellently curyous and cautelous and may stand or syde in much stedd when they please to make use of it.

I will now drawe to an end, intreating yor w^op not to mi^censure my forwardnes in takyng notyce of theise things, for it agrees wth my genius to have some smattering herein, neyther do they any whyt hinder, but further my studyes and judgmt.

And so wth most humble thanks for all yor w^op^s favo^rs, I remayne yor debtor for them, beseeching God Almighty to p^rserve and p^sper you for the good of many, & my most specy^{ll} comfort

ever resting

yor w^op^s to dispose

Grayes Inne the
First day of the

To: Bradshawe

Terme.

To the Right Worp^{ll} Sr Peter
Legh Knight att Lyme in
Cheshyre.





